



The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on the Execution of Educational Measures in the Community

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Introduction

This study is part of the JUST COVID 19 project (Universidade Católica Portuguesa), in partnership with the YO&JUST project (Universidade NOVA de Lisboa) and its overall aim is to understand the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic on the execution of tutelary educational measures in the community. Although this phenomenon is recent, international studies have already highlighted its impact on justice systems and juvenile delinquency (Gordon, Klose, & Lyttle Storrod, 2020; Buchanan, Castro, Kushner, & Krohn, 2020; McCarthy, Homel, Ogilvie & Allard, 2021). However, at national level, there is a lack of research on this topic, thus making this study an added value to understand the reality and subsequently bring contributions that safeguard the interests of children and young people. In Portugal, there is significant evidence for non-institutional measures, although the international literature mainly highlights the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on deprivation of liberty measures carried out in institutions, such as educational centers in the Portuguese case.

Goals & Method

- i. To characterize, according to DGRSP statistical indicators, the evolution of the type of educational tutelary measures carried out in pandemic context and compare it with the characterization of measures in pre-pandemic context;
- ii. To understand the perspective of professionals from social reintegration teams on the impacts of the pandemic on non-custodial measures;
- iii. To understand the perspective of professionals from social reintegration teams, on the impacts of the pandemic in strategies for monitoring the implementation of non-custodial measures.

Sample

- Statistical indicators from the DGRSP Statistical Reports
- 8 professionals from social reintegration teams.

To achieve the defined objectives, data from the Direção-Geral de Reinserção e Serviços Prisionais were analyzed and professionals from the reinsertion teams were interviewed.

Results

Impacts on the determination and implementation of measures

1. Archiving, suspension or change of measure

"in some cases to propose in this case the archiving of the measure applied because the young person had already done x, x hours hmm he had already completed x hours and could not finish for an indefinite period due to non-attributable facts"

2. Closure of entities to carry out Tasks in favor of the Community

"Because the institutions closed, they closed. And they closed for the outside"

3. Delay in psychological and child psychiatric follow-up

"with the pandemic... because consultations ceased to exist or were spaced out"

4. Suspension of Imposition of Obligations

"if they had free time obligations it stopped, school stopped"

5. Proposal for measures

"think a little beyond the pandemic and then we have to look at the needs of kids"

Impacts on the strategies for monitoring the measures

1. Phone contacts

"Now what happens is that the contacts were mostly or were, on my part, I think they were all through telephone contacts, there was a replacement of digital"

2. Remote monitoring

"at the level of the interviews, we tried to maintain some distance monitoring. This we tried. There have been situations where we've done interviews through Webex."

3. Strategies to motivate young people

"but the strategy was precisely the same, that is, let's not drop this and let's remind this family that there is a tutelary educational measure, and there is no face-to-face contact"

4. Use of own resources

"I used, we use our computers, we use our cell phones, we use our ink cartridges, we use our cars, I used things to work"

Final remarks

- Regarding the changes in the non-custodial measures, the impact that the pandemic brought to the practice of its execution was evident both through the analysis of the statistical indicators and the professionals' perspectives.
- For example, the professionals gave great emphasis to the closure of entities that accept young people to fulfill Tasks in Favor of the Community, and in parallel, through the statistical indicators of the DGRSP, we confirm a decrease in the execution of this measure from 2019 to 2020.
- The results regarding "Case-file suspension" were surprising as several professionals reported suspension, but the statistical indicators show that this mechanism of the Public Ministry has been on the decline since 2019.
- Regarding the strategies for monitoring the measures, there was a shift to digital, where the use of phone calls and interviews via Webex stood out among the professionals' discourse.
- Comparing the results of this research with the international panorama, we easily identify similarities, such as the use of technologies to monitor the follow-ups or the decrease in personal contacts. However, the use of the professionals' own resources was extremely referred by them and wasn't evidenced by the international.

References

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